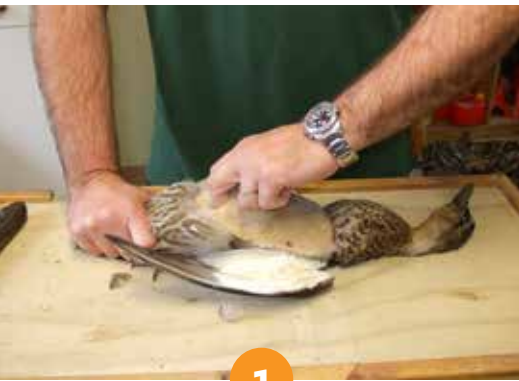
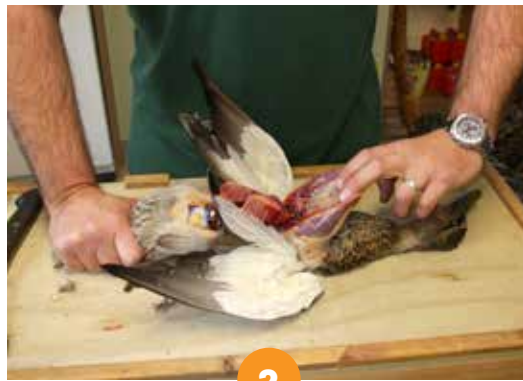


Breasting Mallards on the Bone



1



2



3

The mallard is the mainstay of game bird hunting in New Zealand and hunters are always keen to learn alternative methods of utilising their shot quarry. Breasting birds is an easy method of extracting prime meat, or making the most of those badly damaged birds should full plucking not be attractive.

Retaining the breasts on the bone (sternum) enlarges the portion as all the breast meat is taken, keeps the skin on the meat adding flavour and allows for cooking in a similar method to normal roasting. Tying two breasts together, inserting stuffing between and then roasting is my most preferred successful culinary treat.

This easy method of breasting on the bone is as follows:

1. pluck all the breast feathers from the lower neck to the gut area, making sure you pluck right to the wing base
2. cut a slice across the bird just below the sternum
3. insert your fingers, then while holding firmly onto the tail and feet of the bird, strongly pull the sternum base towards the head (photo 1)

4. once the sternum is fully extended towards the head (photo 2), use a knife to separate it from the last of the rib cage by cutting down around the inside of the sternum towards the back bone
5. finally cut up towards the head through the neck meat and skin to separate the breasts from the bird (photo 3)
6. tidy the meat and wash ready for freezing.

Initially part 4 can be a bit tricky but once you've done a couple of mallards I'm sure you'll be hooked on both the ease of the method, and its cleanliness. Although not common, this method is applied for breasting pheasants and other ducks, but to date I have had very little success using it on Paradise shelduck.

By John Meikle, Fish & Game Officer